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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH U/SYG
SHA ZUKANG

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. U/SYG for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Sha Zukang reviewed his department's development priorities during a March 2 introductory meeting with Ambassador Rice, focusing on a nine-page customized report reviewing DESA's cooperation with USG agencies and proposing areas for future collaboration. He likewise spoke at length in his capacity as a former ranking Chinese Foreign Ministry official to underscore the need for U.S.-Chinese cooperation in resolving such pressing issues as the financial crisis and climate change. End summary.

Current and Future Collaboration

¶2. (SBU) Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang briefed Ambassador Rice during her March 2 introductory call on the priorities of his expansive department (DESA) for closer collaboration with the USG across a broad range of economic, environmental and social issues. Sha proudly unveiled a customized briefing packet for the ambassador, dominated by a 9-page report on DESA's work in general, its specific cooperation with the USG and other American entities, and three pages of ideas for future collaboration. The report highlighted that 114 of DESA's 537 professional full-time staff are U.S. citizens, and Sha purposely included two of his American senior staff in the meeting with the ambassador (including the newly appointed director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat).

¶3. (U) With nearly a quarter of DESA's staff doing statistical analysis work, a large portion of the existing cooperation with the U.S. is in that field. But other areas of strong engagement are in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Commission on Population and Development, and in work related to violence against women and on indigenous issues. Sha's report also focused on DESA's engagement with U.S. civil society organizations, particularly in the areas of violence against women, sustainable development, and public administration.

¶4. (U) Sha laid out in summary form ideas for future cooperation and engagement with the USG, noting the USG's "new emphasis on development" and his hope to travel to Washington in the future to discuss his ideas in greater detail with relevant agencies. He emphasized the high expectations on the new Administration while also noting the tremendous opportunities, joking that his lengthy career as a Chinese diplomat had convinced him that international progress "without the U.S. is impossible, though with the U.S. it may be difficult!" Among Sha's recommendations for heightened U.S. engagement in the economic and social fields were:

-- A U.S. "voluntary national presentation" on U.S. assistance policies at the 2010 Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Annual Ministerial Review, and active participation in the 2010 ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum high-level event;

-- A change in USG position to support the aims of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

-- More active involvement in CSD's Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, and continued active involvement in the implementation of the UNFF's non-legally binding agreement on forests;

-- Collaboration to develop and share climate change and clean energy technology, and to promote the reduction of emissions from deforestation (REDD); and

-- Capacity-building help through USAID and others on statistics, demographic studies, and the better integration of disabled persons into the social and economic mainstream.

Financial Crisis

15. (C) Noting DESA's analytical prowess, Sha boasted that his organization had been among the first to predict the current financial crisis, though he admitted nobody paid heed to its

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warnings. He expressed his personal confidence that China and the U.S. would lead the world in the economic recovery. Indeed, he boastfully attributed his "neutrality" in running DESA to the fact that "China does not depend on the UN for its economic development." Sha said he follows closely Chinese-U.S. consultations (such as through Secretary Clinton's recent visit to Beijing), the G-20, etc., but asked Ambassador Rice for her views on the proper role of the UN in addressing the crisis. The ambassador replied that the UN is an appropriate forum for states to express their views, discuss the crisis' impact on achieving development goals, and share ideas. But she emphatically stated that the UN was not capable of resolving the crisis or of revamping the Bretton Woods architecture. Sha agreed, saying the UN is simply too large to take tough decisions, but ideally suited to letting states complain. Nevertheless, he said DESA would play its part in preparing analytical reports to inform UN debates.

Climate Change

16. (SBU) Sha repeatedly emphasized the special role of DESA, in collaboration with the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), to facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on climate change finance and technology transfer issues. Technology and finance, in his view, are the means for attaining climate change mitigation and adaptation, yet they do not get the attention in negotiations that they deserve. He noted that DESA co-hosted with the Chinese Government an international forum on climate technology transfer last October, and said two further conferences are planned for the coming year.

17. (C) Again sounding more like a Chinese diplomat, Sha said U.S. and Chinese cooperation was critical to addressing climate change, and believes their national views are very similar. Saying he never takes a day off from his DESA duties, he claimed to have spent the past weekend reading "200 pages about U.S.-Chinese cooperation in addressing climate change." He is enthused about the upcoming visit of

China's top climate negotiator to Washington and New York in mid-March. Ambassador Rice asked if DESA had mechanisms for showing developing states how they can address adaptation or mitigation in ways that also foster economic growth. Sha said he was encouraged by the emphasis on "green growth" coming from national capitals, such as Washington, and said he created a working group within DESA to find ways of helping states turn the climate crisis into opportunity, though he again made clear that finance and technology transfer were necessary ingredients. Ambassador Rice encouraged DESA to draw on outside experts as well t o brainstorm on best practices and workable models of green development, to both minimize the impact of climate change and to maximize the benefits of opportunities. U/SYG Sha also drew attention to the benefits of reducing emissions through deforestation.

Comment

18. (C) Sha claimed that the ambassador's visit was the first-ever by a U.S. Permanent Representative, and took full advantage of the opportunity by producing a detailed report on his department, an initiative that none of his UN peers have taken in the ambassador's numerous introductory calls. But Sha also appeared equally informed about and interested in projecting the policy views of the Chinese Government, and could prove a useful interlocutor on bilateral U.S.-Chinese issues, particularly in the area of climate change.
Rice